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## FLORENTINE MOSAIC WORK.

THE city of Florence, which, with Rome and Venice, was long one of the most distinguished seats of Italian art, is remarkable for having produced a beautiful kind of ornamental work which bears its name. It is a species of mosaic in costly materials, based upon directly opposite principles to those recognised by ancient artists. One of the chief of these consists of an intelligent selection of the various shades of colour presented by agates, jaspers, and other hard stones, cut into forms adapted to a settled plan, and artistically arranged with a view to one predominant effect. This ingenious combination produces a kind of painting, in which the varied hues of these beautiful productions are employed to imitate the true colours of nature, as well as the effects of light and shade. Leaves, flowers, butterflies, birds, and even varied landscapes, are cut out with the chisel and polished with the file. The artist contrives to give them the richness of tone which is found in nature, and at the same time the harmony of that great model by bringing together objects which there usually appear together.

In the churches of Florence masterpieces of this kind of work may be seen, either decorating altars or forming part of the architecture of these edifices. The palaces and museums of Europe also contain specimens, more or less remarkable, of this work applied to the ornamentation of furniture of various kinds. The most ancient Florentine mosaic work is plain, like that which the artists of antiquity produced with small cubes of various colours, and which those of modern Rome imitate; but in later times the Florentines sought to give some kind of relief to their mosaic pictures, by inlaying upon the surface hard stones and other costly materials, which they modelled after nature, at one time to represent a fruit, at another a leaf, and at another a flower. Fine pearls, and even diamonds, also found a place in these bas-reliefs. At the present day there are artists in France who produce works of this class.

In the Museum of Cluny there is a remarkable specimen of Florentine art at the commencement of the seventeenth century, of which an engraving is given on the opposite page. It is a rich cabinet partly covered with mosaic work representing landscapes, birds, fruits, and butterflies. Small bas-reliefs in precious materials are mingled with the lively colours of the mosaic, and form a magnificent *ensemble* by means of the variety of framing in lapis-lazuli, cornelian, and silver. Numerous figures, seated or standing, caryatides in silver, give a brilliant effect to the whole, and present a luxuriant richness of materials which can be but imperfectly represented in any drawing or engraving. The upper portion, which exhibits a beautiful contour in its forms, is, like the body of the work, enriched with mosaics and bas-reliefs surrounding carved work and projecting ornaments in silver and gilt bronze. Five statuettes in gilt bronze surmount the whole, giving it somewhat the form of an elegant pyramid.

This piece of furniture, supported by four sphinxes, rests upon a table enriched with squares of jasper, covered with inlaid mother-of-pearl, and having for supports four columns, the capitals of which are adorned with beautiful carving and gilding. The cabinet opens in front by the separation of the two doors, which meet in the middle, and the inner sides of which are decorated with landscapes and birds in Florentine mosaic. The interior compartments, which are divided into recesses and drawers, underwent great changes about the time of Louis XV. Most of the Florentine mosaics, which ought to have been here, have been replaced by miniatures in the style of the eighteenth century.

This valuable article of furniture was first removed to Poland, and afterwards to France, under the empire of Napoleon the First.

## THE TURKISH ARMY.

The improvements in the Turkish army during the last two or three years have been such as to surprise and astound even the most incredulous. The Emperor of all the Russias has long been aware of the extraordinary efficiency of the artillery of the Mussulmans. A work lately published in Germany records an anecdote of considerable interest at the present moment. "When, last summer, General Wrangel took leave of his Majesty the Emperor

Nicolas, the latter presented him with a letter, and said: 'When you get to Constantinople, look a little more closely at the Turkish artillery; it is one of the best in Europe. We owe this to you Prussians. It will require hard teeth to crack that nut.' General Wrangel has looked at the Turkish artillery, and pronounced its efficiency excellent. In the arsenal of Tophana, in Constantinople, there are 1,500 tubes for field artillery, quite newly cast. The manufactory of Tophana, managed by an Englishman, and furnished with a steam-engine, works away continually. A great number of new field-carriages, now mounting, form a pretty considerable reserve."

This is a little exaggerated. The Turkish artillery is not quite so formidable—indeed, was not so at all until the present crisis brought so many Poles, Germans, Hungarians, and Italians, to do the work. The Turks themselves found some difficulty in managing six field batteries. At the time when the generous conduct of the Sultan, in reference to Kossuth, threatened war with Russia, an English officer examined the artillery of Turkey, and found its carriages good, its guns excellent and cleanly kept, and all the general appliances in good order; but when he came to look at the ammunition, he found that there was not a ball that would fit the guns. Recent events have made this arm of the service so important and so essential, that all this has been remedied by able European officers.

Artillery was always the favoured and honoured arm of the Turkish government. Mahmoud destroyed his rebellious and stiff-necked janissaries by the use of cannon. In the year 1796, General Aubert Dubayet, then French minister to the Porte, introduced a reform in the men and matter of the Turkish artillery, carrying out the designs of the Baron de Tott. Dubayet further organised a squadron of cavalry in the French style, and drilled some of the infantry; but the janissaries were opposed to this and to every other reform. But when, under Sir Sydney Smith, these disciplined troops acquitted themselves very well at the defence of Acre, Sultan Selim was so delighted, that he caused a large new barrack to be erected for them, added to their pay, made them an independent corps, and gave them the name of *Nizam Djeditis*, or New Regulars. He used to take singular delight in watching their movements and manoeuvres. Their instructors were all Europeans, but, in accordance with the monstrous tenets of the Koran, no Christians could rank except as renegades.

The surest evidence of a religious being false and rotten, is its obstinate rejection of all ideas of reform and progression. The leaders of the religious, or old party, viewed these changes with alarm; muftis, ulemas, sheiks, and imams, were all furious. They vowed extermination to the new military establishments; they denounced the new state in private; they declared that religion and law were coming to an end; and they incited the ferocious janissaries by every art they could devise to rebel. They agreed, rose in insurrection, attacked the regulars, burnt their barracks, killed the men, or drove them into exile. They did not stop here. They deposed the king, and placed his imbecile cousin Mustapha on the throne. He reigned but a little while. The old king retained a friend in the person of Mustapha Bairacter, pasha of Rudshuk. He determined to restore Selim; and having organised a force, attacked the palace, surrounded the seraglio, and demanded the person of his sovereign. The reigning Sultan Mustapha, much alarmed, began to treat with the rebels, while Selim was assassinated by his orders. But the assassination was useless: Mustapha was deposed immediately after Selim had been strangled. Bairacter found, however, only his master's corpse. Mustapha was seized by his orders and thrust into prison, just in time to save Mahmoud, his brother, who would have been massacred had he not concealed himself under a heap of carpets and mats, where he was found by the old pasha. He was the only male of his race left, and he was instantly proclaimed sovereign by Bairacter, who himself became grand vizier, or prime minister. The new reign was inaugurated, as usual, by blood. Bairacter, on the day of his installation, caused thirty-three heads to fall by the hands of the executioner. The murderers of Selim, all the favourites of Sultan Mustapha, with several officers and civil servants, were strangled and cast

into the Bosphorus, while all the women of Mustapha's seraglio were sewn in sacks and cast into the sea.

The new vizier, the Pasha Bairacter, now began his military reforms, and organised a special regular corps in the army under the title of Seymans. The janissaries murmured, conspired, and rose in arms. One dark night the old reforming pasha's house was found in flames, and every avenue was guarded by his deadly enemies, the old pretorian guards of the empire. The house flamed, and out ran the servants and others, all of whom were ruthlessly put to death. But no Bairacter was seen. It was only some time after that it was found that the unfortunate and well-meaning old man, having collected his jewels and his gold, and taken with him his favourite wife and a black slave, had shut himself in a thick stone tower, hoping thus to escape the fire and defy the swords of his enemies. The three bodies were found some time after on digging out the ruins. They had been suffocated. The tower had been ill constructed for its purpose.

The next object of the janissaries, after murdering Bairacter Pasha, was to reinstate the imbecile Mustapha. Mahmoud strangled him at once; so true is it, that brothers are not brothers when a throne stands in the way. Cadi Pasha, commander of the artillery, meanwhile swept the streets with his guns, and killed all who resisted him. He even destroyed the barracks of the janissaries; but such is the force and power of prejudice, that Mahmoud the reformer was compelled to disband his regular troops, and submit to the old state of things.

Seventeen long years of difficulty and danger were required to prepare the way for a new step in military progress. The bold, daring, open policy was changed for one more suited to the Turkish character—a slow, secret, and insidious policy. The Sultan bought some of the janissaries, exiled some, and quietly and secretly strangled others. All this had its effect; for at last a majority of the officers signed a declaration, by which they bound themselves to furnish a hundred and fifty recruits from each *orta*, and in the most unqualified manner approved of the reforms.

But the Sultan put not too much confidence in all this. He knew that in Constantinople, as in Paris, the victory generally is decided in the streets, and he also knew that until the total destruction of the obstinate and foolish janissaries, he would never be safe. In June, 1825, they showed signs of murmuring and of rebellion. They received grape-shot and cannon as a reply. A bold officer, Kara-gehenem (Black Hell), obeyed the Sultan's behests. He fired the first gun himself, and before night the valiant cohort, that had supported the empire so long, had ceased to exist.

It now became a very difficult thing to re-organise an army. As far as internal tranquillity was concerned, the destruction of the janissaries was useful; but it was a false act when outward defence was considered. The subversion of the spahis, that magnificent irregular cavalry, was also a cause of great weakness. General Valentini has said that "an enlightened prince, instead of introducing European practices into Turkey, would have developed their own peculiar tactics." But, after all, a regular army is the thing wanted in these days, and any step towards that was a step in advance. It is true that the spahis were useful. They were the Cossacks of the Turks. Their attacks were sudden and irregular; they hid behind rocks and bushes; they darted from gullies and narrow passes; they burst from places where none would have suspected their presence. An eye-witness says: "Two or three men will advance and look about them; then you will see at once five or six hundred, and woe to the battalion which marches without precaution, or which is seized with a panic." Such troops were invaluable, and would have always aided the action of a regular force; but Mahmoud was in a hurry, and preferred trusting himself to a half-disciplined horde, utterly incapable of attack or defence.

This accounts for the marvellous success of the Russians in the campaign of 1828-9. The Turks, deprived of their old bold and effective troops, and not yet sure of their new discipline, durst not face the Russians, who arrived at Adrianople with 10,000 sickly troops, in presence of 40,000 regular Turks, who all but ran away. They were, in fact, imperfectly disciplined troops, as Mr. Macfarlane has said, composed in good part of unformed striplings, torn by force from their homes and families.

Ever since 1828 great efforts have been made to advance the Turks in their military tactics and habits. A certain portion of them had evidently progressed even in 1848. Their dress was nearly European, the great, thick, unhealthy, and ugly fez, or red cap, excepted. They looked, however, exceedingly well, except for their slovenly legs and feet. They were all slipshod; their boots were never properly cleaned, were large, and had never seen blacking. Their only way of cleaning is to put them under a fountain and rub them with a birch broom. This causes colds and bronchitis, especially among the recruits from the sunny plains and hills of Asia Minor.

General Marshal Marmont has given a very unfavourable opinion of the Turkish army, and a very correct one. But he wrote twenty years ago, and it is now impossible to deny that a great change for the better has since taken place.

For ages the finest cavalry in the world was that of the Turks. A clever writer says: "In great part both men and horses were brought over from the Asiatic provinces of the empire, and the rest of the men and horses were principally of Turkish descent. The horses, though not large, seldom above fourteen hands, were nimble, spirited, and yet docile, and so trained and bitted as to be perfectly under control: the hollow saddle was rather heavy, but all the rest of the appointments were light. The soldier rode in the broad short stirrup, to which he and his ancestors had always been accustomed, and in which he had a firm and natural seat, and off which it was most difficult to throw him. His scimitar was light, bright, and sharp; and in addition to it he generally carried in his girdle that shorter, slightly-curved weapon called the yataghan, with an edge like that of a razor. Some of the spahis carried long lances or spears, but these were always thrown aside as useless in the *mélée* of the battle. Their tactics were few and simple. If they could not get in the small end of one wedge, they tried another and another wedge: if they penetrated the hostile line, they dealt death around them, their sharp weapons usually inflicting mortal wounds or lopping off limbs. If the enemy gave way, they spread out like a fan, and while some pressed on the front, others turned their flanks and got into the rear. Occasionally, to gain time, the Turks mounted some of their infantry *en croupe* behind their spahis. Thus, early in the battle of Ryminite, when they had to contend with Marshal Suwarow and some Austrians, a body of 6,000 janissaries jumped up behind an equal number of Turkish horsemen, and were carried at full speed to occupy a commanding eminence, of which the Austrians were also desirous of taking possession."

All this activity and peculiar power vanished at the commencement of the reform, and men learnt to regard the Turks with less dread. But now a long rest, the aid of efficient European officers, and a growing disposition to enter heartily into the spirit of change and progress, have once more raised the Turks to a level with most troops in Europe. Their conduct on the Danube holds out great hopes; and before the end of this most just war, there is little doubt that they will have acquired practical experience that will enable them to cope with almost any soldiers in the world. Their improvement is most marked and evident. The numerous pictorial illustrations which have been recently published demonstrate this, for regular and disciplined troops can be judged of even from their outward appearance.

#### LETTER FROM COPENHAGEN.

June —, 1854.

THERE is no part of Europe where so much is thought of the war as in Sweden. We are, as it were, on the spot, and the events in the Baltic have roused us to a pitch of enthusiasm quite novel. The presence of the English and French fleets has set all our statesmen devising plans for the aggrandisement of Sweden. Our military men are getting up a war fever, which would be almost ludicrous did not the future actually present contingencies which may make Sweden play a very important part in the coming events of this unfortunate struggle. Sweden is perfectly aware that the progress of Russia, unchecked and unshaken, would have ended in the entire absorption of her territories; and it is more with a view